

## KARO-ECHO Membership Meeting

May 11, 2020  
via Zoom

### Attendees

NI6A	Don Simon
KJ6AAT	David Swanson
KE6BEE	Howdy Goudey
KN6BUY	Tom Fattaruso
KN6BVF	David Naisuler
KN6CMP	Blake Yeaman
KN6CMR	Susan Yeaman
KG6DXT	Mac Lingo
KK6GIO	Larry Vanselow
KE6HCE	Armando Picciotto
KJ6IUV	Frans Kuypers
K6KOP	Jerry Michaels
KK6NDF	Hal Graboske
KC6OBK	Marian Gade
KK6RED	Diane Richwine
KJ6SWK	Annette McCoubrey
KM6UCF	Natalie DeJarlais
KJ6WSS	Jay Fenton
KK6ZPM	Karen Leong Fenton

### Minutes

Hal moved to approve the April meeting minutes; Annette seconded; motion carried.

### EmComm Hubs

Hal brought up the concept of Emergency Communication hubs, in which radio groups would operate to represent a specific location/area and communicate with the EOC, Fire Dept, local health office, etc. We currently do not do that. When we hold exercises, we typically get low participation from CERT-related ICPs. We don't want to focus on responding only to a particular agency that may not be ready to respond to us.

Karen questioned how well represented KARO-ECHO members are in the existing areas of El Cerrito & Kensington, and noted that Richmond has good representation in many neighborhoods and sub-neighborhoods.

Howdy reminded the group that Rob mapped hams and KE members to a Google map, and

notes that some of the CERT areas don't make sense geographically. The idea of EmComm Hubs is to organize around existing operators, and for them to establish a set of local neighborhood connections that they can feed into the KE ham net. The system would be informal and mutual aid oriented. We want to encourage people to communicate with others in the neighborhood *prior* to an emergency. A coordinator may not be home in an emergency, so we need redundancy -- multiple radio operators helps ensure that you can reach more people.

Don pointed out that in some areas, the ICP locations with active coordinators -- such as EC9 -- have block captains, area coordinators, etc. There are numerous areas in El Cerrito and Kensington that are *not* organized. We need to determine who the stakeholders are, and find a way to let people know we exist. We should be talking about disasters where traditional communications are not available. How will the residents interface with the communications network we provide? Until now, it's only been CERT. We could create something like Berkeley has (Berkeley Disaster Preparedness Neighborhood Network - BDPNN, NALCO ARES/RACES, and BeCERTAINN). How will we interface/interoperate with the community?

Armando commented that most of his neighbors don't even know what CERT is, and that he supports the idea of neighborhood groups, though they must be small and KE would need to provide leadership for training. His neighbors would jump at the chance to communicate via radio, but we need to provide training and leadership.

Howdy agreed that the need and interest is out there; we need to reach them. We could use the well established operators in KE to reach out and do radio nets to practice. Results would then be reported during KE nets. KE can provide classes and resources. We have the CERT survey with names of people who have indicated interest in radio. Interested residents need related activities, though, so we need to provide opportunities to practice. Our website could list times and frequencies during which they could participate.

Annette stated that Kensington first responders are rarely in Kensington or El Cerrito and that local groups make sense. Many stakeholders have no idea that they're stakeholders, so an education process is needed before we can get people interested.

Howdy commented that the premise of CERT is that first responders are likely to be overwhelmed, and there will be limited access to them. Multiple neighborhood hubs in Kensington can reach out to Kensington or to areas of El Cerrito -- the boundaries are not the relevant point. We want clusters of people who can help each other out. Regarding stakeholders, we would traditionally serve a fire dept or CERT, but given the absence of that connection, the stakeholders are us: the people in the community.

David (KJ6AAT) pointed out that in Richmond, they sent out flyers to neighbors and invited them to their house. We can start small in our own area; our own street, asking neighbors if they'd like to learn to communicate without a cell phone in case of an earthquake. It's a

neighborhood organization at the core, because first responders won't be available. People might be interested, but they don't know what to do.

Karen mentioned that we have areas that are mapped out on EC/Ken maps, and that we should develop these rather than starting from scratch. What she's learned is that you can't communicate without a good antenna or line of sight, and that you have to start with equipment.

Armando said that he could organize on his own and doesn't need KE. He would prefer to meet with David and others who have done this to understand what works and what doesn't. We can't have meetings during the pandemic, so gatherings can't happen..

David (KJ6AAT): Re: Armando's comment, he's happy to show Armando what he's done. Email David at [bigbear669@msn.com](mailto:bigbear669@msn.com).

Mac commented that something like Zoom would work without equipment. If you do need equipment, you're not likely to get more people. With an event, you'll want to focus on your own neighborhood, not the larger community.

Howdy said this is community to community coordination -- we're just enabling the organization of groups and inspiring people to do more and fill in other roles.

Don stated that we are needed solely when conventional communications and power are down. If there is no active CERT teams we must identify our stakeholders, who we will provide comms for, identify the type of traffic we're trying to facilitate, and then train in providing that comm service, be it for CERT or other neighborhood groups that are yet to be identified, since El Cerrito city is broke and has stated at their last city council meeting that they are planning on cutting out their CERT program. Lamorinda and Berkeley are doing work that cities don't want to fund. You need some people to go out and recruit, but it's not realistic to think that there are enough hams who are physically able/willing to garner recruits in many neighborhoods. The hub should have a message center that integrates FRS, GMRS, and ham radio. We need to know what kind of traffic will be handled and whether we'll train people to do disaster procedures (a la CERT). Don will report back on what's been done in Berkeley and Lamorinda that can handle CERT training and interface with the city.

Howdy: CERT training is not part of what's being proposed. We would only support radio training.

Jerry felt the area coordinators need to be on FRS and have them get the rest of their CERT people to have local FRS meetings. Also, CERT doesn't teach communications and they should do that.

Hal returned to Don's questions about defining our customer and our mission. Originally, we saw ourselves as emergency communications for CERT. Things have changed now, though. The CERT situation shows there are more vacancies than filled positions. Some CERT area coordinators don't respond, even when they appear on the list of area coordinators. Chief Grupalo appointed four new coordinators over a year ago, and that hasn't worked. CERT has become a small-scale customer for us compared to earlier days. Given EC budgetary problems, CERT training may go away for now and there may not be new CERT graduates for a while.

Hal sees three areas we could serve:

- Existing strong areas with active participants. (EC9, for example.) We'll continue to serve those.
- Local areas/small groups. Nucleation points. There are CERT blocks in EC and Ken that have no area coordinators. We can work with them as well.
- Areas not covered by CERT.

Wind-driven wildfire response is a hot topic, and evacuation is the highest priority right now. Police are in charge; in EC, they're working with the Kensington fire board. Evacuation will be conducted by zones that are not connected to CERT areas. There is currently no role for radio in all this, but we could create a role: radio could report accidents, where people have not evacuated, etc.

A fourth mission is mutual aid. This has to be done with radio and runners. The mission is broader than working with CERT.

FEMA, OES, CERT, Military, Police, etc. are all top-down driven. In disaster response, though, you need bottom up action. At the block level, the experts show up. You find nurses, doctors, communications experts, construction experts. FRS/GMRS engages people at the block level to help themselves and their neighbors.

Frans commented that we need to start by letting people know what we do. People haven't heard of KAROECHO. We could distribute a flyer and let people know how they can contribute. We could generate a list with addresses and contact info, and build from there. We should have a flyer with basic information. A bottom-up structure will work best.

Howdy: We do need to provide forms and practices and not make it a heavy lift for volunteers.

Annette commented that one of the recurring themes is that we need a sister organization that's doing the CERT side of what we're putting together, and we don't know how that will happen. Should we put together a campaign to let people know that this is needed in our community to see who is willing to organize people?

Howdy responded that leadership is needed and we should talk to people -- but that it's not the role of KE to organize that. What we can start with is the communications piece and getting people interacting. Comms is useful on its own, without CERT. Radio is a one to many form of communication, and there's value in building a communication network.

Don suggested that we can use existing models like BDPNN, which saw that CERT was not following up with trainees, so they are having regular training and educational events. They have a website, two trainings per year, etc. They are willing to share their model with us if we want to take on that kind of job. It takes time and effort. Both Lamorinda and BDPNN have relationships with local government. There are some neighborhood groups that don't want government involvement and focus on local activities.

BECERTAINN and BDPNN interface with NALCO who in turn interfaces with RACES and Berkeley, Albany, UC Berkeley, and Alta Bates EOCs as the official ham arm. They hub with BeCERTAINN (FRS/GMRS) operators, as well using a MESH network that will handle any neighborhood CERT FRS/GMRS traffic that needs to go into the EOC. We don't have a mesh system in El Cerrito/Kensington, but could base our model on BDPNN or LaMorinda using analog FM at this time..

Don further suggested that we focus on outreach to citizens of EC and Ken, define the need for a nonprofit group, and find someone to coordinate the responses in a database to see what can be organized. We could distribute the work among a number of people, or focus on local areas. In non-pandemic times, he would have people over to form a local group. This is necessary only because EC/KEN CERT is currently non-operational. Don, emphasized that without a stakeholder to interface with at the neighborhood level, our mission is relegated solely as backup comms for the EC Fire Dept.

Howdy responded that this would need to originate outside KAROECHO. We need focused action items; and example is Karen and Jay holding a training for their neighborhood to train on the Btech GMRS radio.

Karen liked Hal's idea, and reported that she and Jay have worked for years to get Marina Bay together. Proposal: Work toward a SET. Rooftop antennas are going to be useless if we evacuate. We need to use our handhelds and align ourselves with police to help them with evacuation.

Don replied that Berkeley (via NALCO or BECERTAINN) isn't doing radio for evacuation, and that we don't currently have a role in fire evacuation. EC and Kensington police departments would have to make such designations..

Howdy requested that Karen and Jay record the GMRS training on May 23, and suggested that any Zoom training should be recorded for future use.

**ACTION ITEMS:** Hal requested that the group help with four tasks:

- Identify where there are existing comms hubs in El Cerrito & Kensington that are functional, such as EC9 as well as potential hubs (as in where there is a good CERT presence), and have KE work with what's left of the areas.
- Get a small set of people who can talk to BDPNN, BeCERTAINN, and NALCO ARES/RACES,. They are models of what we want to do, so we should talk to them.
- Think through the mission statement of the comm hubs and develop a soft startup plan.
- Next meeting: discuss FRS/GMRS hubs.

Diane agreed to work on #1; Hal will work on the Kensington piece of #1.

Howdy also suggested **bringing together the various training materials**. If you have experience organizing a local net and can share materials, provide them so we can have a stockpile of resources.

David (KJ6AAT) issued a “shout out” to David Naisuler and son Jacob for checking in on the nets. A **GMRS net is held at 11:00 on the first Wednesday of every month** on Ch. 15 (when the sirens go off).

**May 23 training will explain how to operate BTech GMRS V1 radios**. Email Karen if you want to attend and to get Zoom password. Everyone is welcome. Tell neighbors.

Howdy: Idea to maintain momentum is to have some level or **reporting of local activities during the Thursday nets**, when there's news. It's good to know what other areas are doing to keep people informed and inspired.

Blake mentioned that in Albany, they need to connect with their EOC and fire department. They need block captains, etc. They're going to do it themselves.

The meeting was adjourned.